

M104 Week 8
From ACH Smith, Paper Voices

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MIRROR, 1937-1945

THE *Mirror* plainly advised its readers to vote Labour in 1945, though never in quite as many words. Labour's unexpected and huge victory led some, at the time and since, to credit the *Mirror* with a large responsibility for the result. One cannot know what truth there is in that. Experimental evidence about attitude-formation suggests that the paper is not likely to have changed many voters' minds, but it may have played an important part in getting the already decided Labour vote out to the polls, and particularly in mobilizing the Forces vote, which historians have guessed to be around 90 per cent for Labour. The paper's great popularity among servicemen is not in doubt,¹ and it helps to account for estimates of up to 11,000,000 readers in 1945, although the printed copies averaged 2,400,000 daily. If the *Mirror* did significantly influence the pattern of voting it must have done so by crystallizing a new mood that was already strong and widespread among the electorate.

In documents discussed later in the chapter there is firm evidence that a new mood of radical populism had seized many in 1945. A reading of the *Mirror* in the election period, and at intervals during 1937-45, suggests that the paper did develop a congruence with that mood. It may thus have served to crystallize the voting intentions of many of its readers: not only those who would have accepted the *Mirror* as their spokesman even if it had not changed (just as many *Express* readers presumably felt that their paper continued to speak

¹ In *Newspaper Reading in the Third Year of the War*, Allen & Unwin, 1942, P. Kimble found that 30.3 per cent of servicemen and 32.4 per cent of servicewomen read the *Mirror* in late 1941; the corresponding figures for the *Express* were 26.5 per cent and 13.6 per cent. No other paper approached the popularity of those two among servicemen, of whom nearly half read them in 'institutions'—canteens, etc.

Kimble's figures for civilian readership are also pertinent. Among factory workers the *Express* reached 22.6 per cent of men (*Mirror* 24.9 per cent) and 10.1 per cent of women (*Mirror* 24.5 per cent), but among men doing other work (presumably of higher status on average) the *Express* with 26.9 per cent easily beat the *Mirror*'s 19.8 per cent. Among women non-factory workers, also, the *Express* narrowed the gap: 17.2 per cent against the *Mirror*'s 21.0 per cent. Thus there is evidence that the *Express*'s war-time appeal was typically to a higher social class than the *Mirror*'s. Among all women readers the *Mirror* had 23.5 per cent against the *Express*'s 13.8 per cent, which seems to validate the *Mirror*'s special direct address to women, discussed later in the chapter.

MIRROR, 1937-1945

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for them) but, crucial to the question of influence, existing readers who responded politically for the first time, and perhaps new readers too, attracted by finding their mood articulated. The *Mirror*, then, may not only have confirmed but also helped to spread the new mood, during the later war years.

The evidence of the *Mirror*'s congruence with the populist mood will rest mainly on the paper's relationship with its readers. First, an astonishing proportion of the paper in 1945 was given to readers' letters, and stories derived from readers' own experiences. Sixty-five per cent of the election coverage on July 4 was contributed by readers, and from June 13 to July 5 readers contributed on average nearly thirty per cent of the paper's electoral material. For the possibility that the reader feedback was substantially invented by the paper's staff, that they wrote most of the letters, there is little evidence, and sheer mass and variety against it. The second striking element in the relationship was the directness of the paper's address to its readers, felt as much in its sympathy with distressed readers as in its brusque admonitions to others who had only to get on with their jobs like everyone else in a difficult time. The latent but powerful function of the direct mode of address was that it had about it the feeling of democracy, of people talking straight to each other in 'real' language about their lives and hopes, and by the same token an anti-authoritarian feeling: we, the people, can get things moving, and done—anyone who directs us can do so only with our consent. The directness was embodied in the *Mirror*'s main campaign slogan in 1945, 'Vote for Him' (characteristically started by a reader's letter, though the authenticity in that particular case is dubious)—an appeal to wives whose husbands in the Forces had not registered as Service or proxy voters, asking them to cast their votes as they believed their husbands would have done. Two assumptions underlay the appeal, that women needed chivvy into voting at all, and that the Forces were predominantly for Labour.

Around those central elements, the rest of the *Mirror* formed a convincing totality, in the coherence of its parts, the matching of tone to content, and the confident ability to assimilate and make sense of new facts. There is also evidence from opinion polls that the election issues most often treated by the *Mirror* closely conformed to those thought most important by a majority of voters. The same was not true of the *Express*.²

² A comparison between topics covered by the *Express* and those rated most pressing in public opinion polls has been made at the start of the chapter on the *Express* in 1945. A direct statistical comparison between the *Mirror*'s and the *Express*'s coverage would require a percentage content

It is not plausible that the *Mirror* could have conjured up so convincing an appearance of confident exchange between itself and its readers expressly to fight an election. The question is one that Hugh Cudlipp has also asked: 'The intriguing point is not that the newspaper was accurate but why it was accurate'. An answer is that, in its election manners, the *Mirror* was cashing credit that had been banked over a period. To prove the hypothesis, a longer back-perspective than 1945 is required. The year 1937 was chosen as the start of the sample, because by then the new regime of Guy Bartholomew, Hugh Cudlipp, Basil Nicholson, Cecil King and Cassandra had begun to alter the paper from the quite different character it had during the first thirty years of its life. The sample comprised the papers of May and June every year. For reasons explained later, a sample was also made of a Forces newspaper, *Good Morning*, which was associated with the *Mirror*.

The main sample concentrated on material principally addressed to the Forces, and that directed at women, the two paper-reader relationships that were dramatized in the 'Vote for Him' campaign in 1945, and that most clearly embodied the mode of direct address. As a control sample of the rest of the paper, attention was also paid to Cassandra, and readers' letters. The development of each kind of material will be examined in turn, at periods from 1937 to 1945. Having seen what credit was banked, in the second part of the chapter it will be possible to consider the 1945 election material as the encashment.

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1 Into Battle

In 1938 the *Mirror* demanded a National Government, National Service, a joint command with France, urgent re-armament, and 'the best brains in the country to direct us'. In the following year, impatient with the 'old men' and 'Munich Muddlers' of Chamberlain's government, it called for Churchill to form a new one. Ten days after war was declared, the paper said: 'In 1939 we cannot endure fools in high places as we did after 1914. The self-revealed blunderers must go. We endured muddlers too long in the last bitter

analysis of the *Mirror*; but its forms of content, including a very high contribution from readers, make content-classification so complicated as not to be worth the labour. Evidence of which election issues were most prominently treated by the *Mirror*—housing, above all—can, however, be found in the analysis of the 1945 *Mirror*'s principal themes later in the chapter.

struggle.' The Ministry of War was described as 'The Museum Ministry'.

When Churchill became Prime Minister in 1940, the *Mirror* assured him: 'You need not worry about the men and women of Britain, Mr. Churchill. The common people of this land have the courage . . . above all give them LEADERSHIP.'

It will already be apparent that for the *Mirror* there were two wars to be fought: the military war against Hitler, to 'rid the world of tyranny', and the war to win that war, against 'fools in high places' at home. From this second war was later to emerge a third, the war to win the peace, the decisive battle of which was the 1945 election. By attending to the way in which the paper fought the first two wars, one can see how its credit then banked was cashed in the third war. The processes were not, of course, clearly separate in time.

Also apparent in the brief examples above is one characteristic address of the *Mirror* to its war-time readers. By a kind of ventriloquism, it is not speaking to its readers but assuming what it took to be their voice, and letting its readers overhear it addressing those in power. It was not always thus: the *Mirror* was later able to address its readers plainly.

No one has doubted that the *Mirror*'s readers, on the whole, accepted the paper's ventriloquist voice as their own. It was, said Aneurin Bevan,³ 'in a special sense the paper of the Armed Forces'. The war-time *Mirror* was the first daily paper to be read by 'other ranks' in the Forces and at home, according to A. J. P. Taylor.⁴ Maurice Edelman⁵ explains that Guy Bartholomew, the *Mirror*'s editorial director from 1934 to 1951,

was pre-occupied with the links between the home front and the Forces. Bart had appointed Greig to write a regular column dealing with soldiers' grievances. The idea had immediately caught on. Thousands of letters flooded into the office, not only with servicemen's grumbles but their wives' as well. There were down to earth complaints about delays . . . red tape . . . unfairness and a hundred other things.

Hugh Cudlipp mentions that the paper deliberately kept itself informed about its Forces readers by asking those staff who were in

³ Quoted in Cudlipp, *Publish and Be Damned*, Dakers, 1953. All quotations from Cudlipp in this chapter are taken from the same book.

⁴ A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945*, Oxford, 1965.

⁵ Maurice Edelman, *The Mirror, A Political History*, Hamish Hamilton, 1966.

uniform to feed back the atmosphere 'in their articles and letters'. Cudlipp also illuminates the historical development of the paper's ventriloquism:

the battle conducted in pre-war years against the smothering of legitimate grievances by military red tape explains much of the paper's war-time and post-war acceptability to the Forces . . . the *Mirror* needed no second thoughts in determining the path it should pursue in the Hitler War. Here above all was the newspaper of the masses, the bible of the Services rank and file, the factory worker and the housewife. No daily journal was in a better position to register the people's pulse beat, reflect their aspirations and misgivings, and make articulate their relation or censure on the progress of the war. All the clues were in the *Mirror*'s postbag from its readers.

Cudlipp quotes Roy Lewis to the effect that the *Mirror* described the war in terms of 'the man at the receiving end . . . the *Mirror* settled down to fight his fight and air his grouse . . . as everyone now knows, the *Mirror* was in fact an integral part of Service morale . . . it was in touch with Service feeling as no other paper. It was the paper . . . of fighting men innocent of ideologies.' 'It regarded itself,' says Cudlipp, 'as a paper with a mission and it was accepted as such': a vital part of that mission, he says, was to provide matter for the serious debate that took place in Nissen huts and air-raid shelters, at home and abroad.

At this point the question is the *Mirror*'s relationship with the Forces, but the references to 'the factory worker and the housewife' will be important later in the chapter.

The theme of the 'war to win the war' was most explicitly drawn out by Tom Wintringham in a series of articles beginning in 1940. Wintringham was a well-known and controversial representative of the Popular Front when he began writing for the *Mirror*. He had been active in the politics of the 1930s, had fought in Spain, and had set up a centre for the training of an efficient Home Guard, the need for which he often argued in his weekly column. Later in the war he was to stand as a Common Wealth Party candidate.

Wintringham's articles spoke to the Government for the soldiers, complaining of shortages and inefficiency, ending on the note of 'And let's get it done quickly'. He reaches the centre of his argument in an article on June 5, 1941, where he is proposing that the men saved from Crete should be brought home to teach the British forces how to fight warfare from the air. He then looks at the conventional opposition to such an idea and spells out his answer to it.

Responsible soldiers may object: 'We fought in several wars, in 1914-1918 on the North West frontier. Our experience of war is much greater than that of these boys.' Yes; there are soldiers with as many years fighting to their credit as these boys have weeks. But you learn more about modern war from one day under the dive-bombers than anyone would learn in the whole four years of the last war.

Therefore the leaders of these men from Crete, when they are brought here, should not be made to listen to any authority on tactics who belongs to the past. They should be given a free hand to train anew first a number of divisions, then the whole army and the Home Guard. We need a clean sweep, away from the old days of war. We need a war to win the war.

Call that 15,000 home to start this offensive. And tell them to get on with it at a blitzkrieg pace.

Setting the past against the present, the article questions the value, in this completely new situation, of that last defence of the old against the new, 'experience'. It is not simply that the older, 'responsible soldiers' are a little out of date; they are unable to comprehend the realities of modern warfare because it is different in quality from what they have known. They have not had the modern experience, and therefore have missed the modern meaning.

Thus a radical break with the past is necessary, 'a clean sweep'. Within the larger conflict against Nazi Germany there is a struggle to be won at home, a struggle to change a traditional thinking which is merely irrelevant now. This change will not be easy—Wintringham talks of 'a war to win the war', 'this offensive', 'a blitzkrieg pace'—but on its success the outcome of the larger war depends.

Not only is the structure of the argument significant; its tone has a relentless authority behind it, an assurance that the writer is empowered to speak for one group to another. The beginning catches a note of fairness:

Responsible soldiers may object . . . Yes, there are . . .

The writer sees the point and admits its superficial authenticity. But then he confidently hammers home his points, and moves to the imperative mood.

If you are to launch an 'offensive' to win the war, it must be launched against certain ideas and certain individuals who hold to them. It is here that an Us/Them consciousness, with deep roots in working-class mistrust of shadowy authority, enters, in battle-dress. The *Mirror* is for us, the ordinary soldier trying to win a war, against

them, politicians, industrial magnates, civil servants, top brass, whose inefficiency makes them 'the tools, unwitting perhaps, of Britain's enemies'. This Us/Them consciousness is latent in all the common-sense advice given to soldiers, but seldom explicit.

Wintringham's central theme, the need for a radical break with the past and the struggle at home against those in the War Office, and elsewhere, who were making such a break necessary, recurred in his column throughout the period. He invited soldiers to write and tell him what they thought of the conduct of the war, and summarized their answers under the headline 'Give us the right fight'.

Blanco and brass, polishing things that shine already, or ought not to shine for action, are the main grouches.

On July 17 he spells out the message:

And how to get such a modern Air Force? Obviously the first thing to do is to get rid of the men at the top, who understand so little of the changes in warfare that they have prevented our having modern dive-bombers.

The authoritative tone of June 5 is also characteristic.

News from Egypt is so scanty that we cannot tell if the fighting near Sollum is the beginning of a drive or not. Since Italian troops played the main part in it it is probably not.

This is the tone of the military expert, the man who can tell us, later, 'Crete is NOT a rehearsal for the invasion of Britain', and lecture the military or the Government:

That, in outline, is the story of Greece. It is not a good story. It is a story of men wrongly placed, made to fight in an obsolete way. That their courage and endurance redeemed the story must not blind us to the need for modern tactics and strategy.

That Wintringham should consult, or appear to consult, the soldiers themselves, and speak for them directly to the Government, gives the column an authority different in kind from that of the military expert. It can speak from one group to another, the stance which the *Mirror* was to adopt at the 1945 election. Wintringham had both kinds of authority, and in his *Mirror* columns one could feed the other.

Wintringham spoke for the *Mirror*, not merely in it. Elsewhere in its pages, the *Mirror* can be heard speaking in a similar way:

Shall we never get rid of these boobies who cannot understand that *Anything* may happen to those who will not be

prepared in time for the new form of war, which is war in the air? They utterly lack imagination, foresight, speed in preparation. They are the victims of the slap-dash touch. And they exasperate this nation by their everlasting rot about valour and one Briton being the equal of a dozen Germans. (Leader column, June 4.)

Zec's cartoon showed a huge alarm clock (Our War Effort) with the caption 'Still Going Slow'. Three days later, Live-Letters, answering a reader's criticism that the *Mirror* is over-critical of the Government, expressed approval of 'any sacrifice that will rid us of slothful politicians, of old-fashioned soldiers and of parasitic communities, both rich and poor, who are indifferent to our cause'. Cassandra on the same day wrote:

To those who are worried, critical or alarmed about the events in Crete, I offer as balm the soothing ointment of General Sir Charles Bonham-Carter: 'Criticisms, however, would be more helpful if a greater understanding were shown of the present difficulties of supply and administration due to long postponement in beginning our preparations for war . . .' Isn't that the same answer that can be so glibly proffered if we lose the war? When all is at stake, is it enough to say we weren't ready? Or that we were too late? Or that Hitler had the start on us? As a prelude or a postscript to past and possible future disasters, I find the General's inane remarks peculiarly disturbing.

His attack on Them, who are losing the war, continued the next day:

Lord Teviot, in a remarkable exposition of complacency, even goes so far as to advise us to say, 'Well done! Well tried! Carry on. If there is anything more any of us can do to help just tell us about it.' . . . nobody can say that an encounter in which we were forced to leave about 15,000 troops on the island and lost four cruisers, and six destroyers, is a sufficient cause to shout 'Well done!'

And if you still think so, ask the relatives of the men who have not returned . . .

As a parting shot, Lord Wolmer thoughtfully reminds us that 'we have still many months of deficient equipment before us and that victory cannot be attained until that has been made good.' I doubt if there is a single elector in the country who is unaware of this crushingly obvious fact. The revealing thing about these peers, with their compulsory ear plugs for all, is

that they cannot conceive a government virile enough to welcome criticism and benefit by it.

What do they want—an Anglicised Reichstag egged on by organised cheer leaders?

On June 12 the leader column refers back explicitly to the 'War to Win the War' column (by 'Our Military Correspondent, Tom Wintringham') and summarizes the argument: 'in these critical times dead wood isn't even of use for the coffins of those martyred through muddle.'

To gauge the *Mirror's* distinctiveness among other newspapers of the period, the leaders of *The Times*, *Daily Express* and *Daily Herald* at the time of the Crete evacuation may be compared with the *Mirror's*, on June 10, which tried to separate what was fair and unfair criticism of the Government's conduct of the war. It opened:

Another small piece of good news!—the parliamentary debate on the evacuation of Crete and the situation in the Mediterranean will *not* be secret. We are to be allowed to know where we stand, or whence we have retreated—and perhaps why!

The tone is that of superior surprise: at last the Government is beginning to move in the right direction ('our' direction). There is, therefore, another *small* piece of good news to report. Only small, but in these hard times that merits an exclamation mark. 'Not' is in heavy type in '*not* be secret', since the Government has now reversed a previous decision to fall in line with what 'we' have already argued. We are to be 'allowed to know'—at last we, the people, are being conceded some democratic rights; the sarcasm rings bitterly on in 'where we stand, or whence we have retreated'.

A later paragraph articulates the ironic tone into a parody of upper-class speech, to criticize 'ministers or generals who just can't believe that a nasty move will be made, as really it wouldn't be the right move on gentlemanly lines.'

The Times, in its first leader on June 9, saw the problem more philosophically:

A certain lack of foresight, failure to see things whole, seems to have dogged our war effort from the first. Men change, and, though the changes have often been for the better, the failure is not remedied. May it not be that it is the system that is chiefly at fault? Too much weight seems still to be put on the shoulders of the Prime Minister, strong and unbowed as they are.

The language is constantly qualified, and the criticism is levelled not at personalities but at 'the system'. The Prime Minister is carefully protected in his dignity ('strong and unbowed') from any slight sting that might be implied.

On June 10 in its Opinion column the *Express* was also finding fault with the system, and appealing to MPs to get at the facts during their recess:

The Daily Express hopes that MPs have been finding out about things in their constituencies, that they haven't just been playing golf, or lolling about.

We hope that they have been working as hard as they demand the industrial masses should work, that they have discovered the where's and why's of the war factory bottlenecks.

It is because they are short of this and that piece of equipment that our generals are often made to look inferior. And it is because Goering has screwed so much out of the German Home Front that the German High Command looks so brilliant.

The *Express* is concerned to mobilize all the resources of the nation, but it is not the generals who are at fault. Rather, it is the 'war factory bottlenecks', an impersonal object of criticism again. The people directed by the Government are no less impersonal, 'industrial masses'. On June 4 the *Express* outlined what it saw as necessary in the present difficult situation: 'At this time, of all times, the crowning needs of the people are faith and understanding'. On June 6 it argued that 'the mood of the nation is to say to its rulers: "take us and get something done with us. You can still have greater power with us and America than Hitler can squeeze from all his conquests"'. A popular demand for leadership is echoed here as much as in the *Mirror*, but the relationship between leaders ('rulers') and led is notably more deferential—we, the people, are to initiate change by provoking the government, but we are to provoke them to 'take us and get something done with us'. This 'get something done with us' is quite different from the *Mirror's* mood of 'let's get something done'. It suggests that the role of the people is essentially passive, to be led, to take orders. We are to offer ourselves for their use. The *Mirror's* stress is the reverse: people demand a government they can use. On June 9, the Opinion column summed up the hour as being one of 'endeavour and of sacrifice. We will win this war quickly only if our leaders and our people together answer every demand made upon their energies.' The syntax of the last sentence

is fascinating. To whom does the initial 'we' refer, when the sentence refers both to 'our leaders' and 'our' people, ending with 'their' energies? Who is speaking here?

On June 10 the *Daily Herald's* long editorial is highly critical of the way the war is being conducted at all levels:

And, most regrettably, ostrichism has its representatives among the organisers of war industry, its vital efforts are to that degree enfeebled; even among the military minds to whom we should be able to look for the grimmest and most penetrating assessment of our task.

The editorial sharply attacked the 'national complacency' which would allow the war to be lost.

It is *not* easy to offer the hard talk of realism to people who believe that soothing syrup is the only food fit for human consumption.

And a great many of our people are still like that.

And again:

... there is a large and influential section of the public which insists in regarding the war as a walk-over for Britain—somewhat prolonged, perhaps, but a walk-over all the same.

The *Herald's* criticisms are similar to those of the *Mirror*, attacking the military leaders for trying to paste over the problem. What is missing from the *Herald's* editorial is the aggressive Us/Them tone of the *Mirror*. The *Herald's* remarks are addressed to 'those who are in a position to comment and to criticize'; they are made in a tone of democratic debate—'most regrettably ... to that degree ... a great many of our people ... somewhat prolonged, perhaps'—to which such highly-placed people are thought to be accustomed. The *Herald* seeks to persuade, the *Mirror* threatens. Implicit in the *Herald's* tone is an acceptance that other points of view are in debate; its own argument is made firmly, is more sharply critical than *The Times's*, less readily passive than the *Express's*, but it remains a contribution, on behalf of the national interest. The *Mirror's* ventriloquized sarcasm sounds as though it issues from the object itself of the debate, the people; pressing behind its tone is the populist feeling that if, in the last resort, the debate is ineffectual, then the debaters will be by-passed by the *Mirror's* readers. It is against the *Herald's* residual tolerance that the *Mirror's* aggressive tone is most sharply distinguished.

The two most popular papers are also the two most in contrast.

In between are *The Times* and the *Herald*, both moderately critical, one blaming 'the system' from a traditional fourth-estate posture of armchair statesmanship, the other more squarely aimed against persons, or a type of person, but both mediating between government and people. The *Mirror* situates itself solidly among the people, a tribune⁶ loyal to its readers and owing no obligation of respectfulness to the government it criticizes. The *Express* seems to speak from a position above debate or society: its first-person plurals are normally used only by the sovereign. It is speaking out of its idea of the nation—grand, imperial, but addressed to suburban readers, who passively wait, wanting to be led by 'rulers', because they wisely understand (the *Express* assumes) that to be the principle of greatness in a country.

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During the war Tom Wintringham, Bill Greig, Garry Allighan and Ann Towers were all writing for the Forces, Allighan's column being the most regular during 1942-1945. Its tone is like that of an elder brother, firm, well-informed, but basically 'on your side'. It is a friendly, relaxed tone:

Don't worry chum. No declaration of banns is necessary for a Register Office wedding.

but scrupulously fair. Allighan has no time for slackers, for those who don't realize that 'we're all in this together'. Thus a soldier aged 41, who enlisted for four years in 1938, writes asking whether he can get his discharge now that his period of enlistment is completed, and receives the reply:

Not on your life. You're in—for the duration.

There is a level voice behind the banter. But whilst Allighan keeps firmly to the army rules, within the limits of law and order, the tone of his answers often moves against the authority which he is explicitly buttressing, so that he is also able to be on the side of the soldier, to apply the service regulation and still be 'one of the boys'. Answering a soldier's inquiry as to why he has not been promoted, Allighan picks up the fact that the soldier lost a good conduct badge in 1940:

That's the solution to your problem. You've got to regain the time you lost for being a bad lad.

⁶ The characterizations of Armchair Statesman and People's Tribune are borrowed from Graham Martin's essay 'Public Voices' in *Your Sunday Paper*, ed. Hoggart, London University Press, 1967.

Allighan here does not question the regulation, made by Them, but the use of 'being a bad lad' is a signal transmitted and received within 'our' group, a group which knows about the abstract rules but makes allowances for people. Sometimes this sympathy is sharply linked to the critical vocabulary of the 'war to win the war'. Asked why service letters have to be written in formal circumlocutions, Allighan replies:

Because—it is in the rules. It's an official 'must'. To cut the flowery language and get on with the war would upset the rule book.

Allighan's column gives the impression of being itself very efficient. Information is succinct:

Demobbing will be on a planned basis so as not to throw too many men on the labour market at once.

Bevin means to 'feed' men back into industry so as to avoid mass unemployment. Nothing has yet been decided about gratuities.

There is an official impersonality about this tone which contrasts sharply with the humanity of 'bad lad'. Nevertheless, this efficiency is deployed on behalf of those in need:

The Ministry of Pensions, when I reported the facts, agreed to put Tilbury on full pension, are providing surgical boots, and promised that he will be looked after.

The sentence moves with a neat efficiency: Allighan is tidily prepared to fight the powers-that-be when injustice appears to be being done. 'Blighty', RASC, writes to ask Allighan: 'Can an OC stop a man having his wife with him in a town which is *not* a restricted area?' Allighan replies:

He certainly can't. If he attempts to, send me full particulars, and it will soon be altered.

Allighan's self-confidence in his column's ability to 'get things done' is communicated very clearly here. But it is not just a matter of 'getting things done'. It is a matter of getting things done for Us, the men in the ranks, often over against Them, the officers and the service bureaucracy. Allighan is a figure who can talk Their language, play the game according to Their rules, but, basically, he's still one of Us. His tone, which shared its brisk efficiency with the women's pages, is as representative of the *Mirror* as Wintringham's. Allighan is another link in the binding of the *Mirror* with Us.

The concepts and imagery of 'The War To Win The War' are extended into the third theme, 'The War To Win The Peace'. By 1944 the *Mirror* clearly sees the defeat of Hitler as only the first step in a two-stage process. This is brought out by the editorial of June 14, 1944, 'Votes For Heroes'. The first paragraph praises the heroism of the British soldier, 'the individual Tommy'. The editorial continues:

These gallant men are fighting and they know what they are fighting for. Their first task is to rid the world of tyranny. Their second, no less important, is to create a 'new world' in which men may live in peace and fairly shared prosperity. But how is this to be done? Do the soldiers realise that just as they fight now for military victory, they will have subsequently to fight for political victory?

Their weapons will not be guns and grenades but votes—a prosaic word among so much glory, but one of profound significance . . .

Votes are weapons fit for heroes. Our soldiers should make sure they have got them.

The editorial moves from the level of general assertion to that of more detailed advice, but it speaks on behalf of the soldiers—'these gallant men'—in a tone curiously civic by comparison with its address directly to soldiers or women. 'No less important' has a pedagogic air, which increases with the question marks. The questions are not direct—'Do you soldiers realize . . . Your weapons will not be . . . '—but 'Do the soldiers realize . . . Their weapons will not be . . .', as though the *Mirror* wishes to allow the soldiers to overhear a more general, public conversation. The unwillingness to address the soldiers directly, in sharp distinction to the public-forum role the *Mirror* had developed elsewhere, may have been calculated to bring pressure on the soldiers through their families at home.

The war imagery of the editorial is significant, centred on the phrase 'political victory', another extension of the theme of the war to defeat Hitler. Unlike the 'War To Win The War', however, it is not a preliminary battle necessary for the successful execution of the Hitler war but rather its logical sequel. Just as the soldiers have fought Hitler to defend one kind of freedom, so at home they will have to fight to win another kind of freedom, the freedom to

create 'a new world' in which many may live in peace and enjoy a fairly shared prosperity.

In the same paper on the same day Garry Allighan was also writing his weekly Forces column, and the war imagery and sense of wider struggle is also caught in that. He writes:

Beware, lest, when the next election comes—which will be your opportunity to compel the politicians to give you 'the better Britain' they now talk about—you have not left yourself voteless, and therefore powerless.

The word that leaps from the page here is 'compel'. It suggests the unwillingness of the politicians to do what the soldiers want unless the soldiers make sure the politicians are left with no alternative. There is a suspicion of the whole political process, which underlies the implicit contrast between 'give you' and 'talk about'. The passage stresses the importance of the soldier taking part in the democratic procedure—it equates 'voteless' with 'powerless'—and, most important of all, it asserts that real power lies with the electors, not the elected, with the people, not the politicians. The *Express* saw the voting procedure as the privilege of concelebrating the triumph of the hero; in comparison the *Mirror's* political imagery is radical. We, the *Mirror's* readers, are the masters now.

* * *

Information about its Forces readers reached the *Mirror* through letters from them and from its correspondents in uniform: among the latter were Hugh Cudlipp and Cassandra, both of whom worked on Forces newspapers. Another important channel was *Good Morning*, a daily paper for the submarine branch of the Royal Navy. It was published between 1943 and 1945, the issues being undated but numbered for distribution on board during the course of the voyage. As the papers were all printed some time ahead of the voyages they were unable to carry news but were filled instead with educational articles, quizzes, 'things to think about', pin-ups and cartoons, including the celebrated Jane. *Good Morning* was published by the *Mirror*, with the enthusiastic agreement of the Admiralty. It was run by Bartholomew—with such success, says Cudlipp, that Bartholomew could have been rewarded by almost any honour he chose. The *Mirror* did not advertise its control of *Good Morning*, but the regular appearance of Jane, among other things, must have suggested the paper's parentage to its readers. It seems likely that the *Mirror* picked up new readers through *Good Morning*. It can be seen as an instrument for learning, even practising, modes of address that would feed back into the *Mirror*.

The sailor readers were repeatedly invited to send the paper their

views, and requests. A paragraph in issue No. 675 gives one some idea of the kind of relationship that *Good Morning* was building up with its readers:

Of course, I know you will appreciate that it is more than one man's job, now, to cope with all your letters—the answers alone, apart from requests for gramophone needles, baby shoes, and gold braid, etc., for which we have to comb London, take quite a while.

It was a relationship of trust, very similar to that being built up by Garry Allighan in the Forces column in the *Mirror* itself.

Perhaps to make up for its inability to publish replies to readers, *Good Morning* began a series of interviews with the relatives of men who were serving in the submarine branch. Readers were invited to:

Make this your own newspaper by sending us the address of your wife, your mother, your girl friend, so that we may photograph them, and publish their pictures and greetings in these papers.

At first these interviews were published irregularly, but by issue 55 they had become a daily front page feature. Each bore a photograph of the family and then an interview, which carried snippets of information about home life and greetings to the sailor whose name was headlined at the top of the article. The language of the interviews has a peculiar authenticity about it; the language moves into a private, working class, colloquial idiom, very different from the public populism of the *Mirror's* leaders.

Here is one fairly typical interview from the middle of the run examined, interview 671, quoted in full.

Your father is hoping to beat you in a game of darts at the King's Head next time you come home on leave to 9 Salisbury House, St. Mary's Park, Islington N.1., Stoker Bill Armstrong.

He's been getting in some practice lately and seems quite confident of wiping out the defeats you inflicted on him last time you went there together.

Both your mother and father are keeping well, Bill, and so for that matter are the rest of the family. Doris is working hard at her dressmaking and Rita is busy learning machining. Nellie and Edie are keeping the railway going, and Esther is still on government work, we are told.

Ethel, too, has a full-time job on her hands, for young Carol is just getting to the stage where she makes her presence known.

As for the other members of the family, Bill, there is young Beryl who is still at school and John, who has just about seen enough of Italy after three years with the army in that area.

Joyce is waiting to welcome you home and so are your nephews, Bernie and Brian, who were very anxious to stay away from school so that they could send their own messages to you. Needless to say, school won.

Billy Fowler is keeping fitter now, and he, too, is hoping it won't be long before you are able to visit the Odeon and see some more thrillers.

Until then, Bill, all the family are thinking of you and all send their love, but with it comes a request. Please write a little more often, Bill.

The first impression is a special quality of 'flatness', the flatness of the everyday. The repetition of the name Bill, the names Edie, Rita, Carol and so on, all are exposed in a moment of intimacy to the public world. A number of expressions belong very clearly to a spoken, informal language, and one of them in particular, 'Nellie and Edie are keeping the railway going', embodies a homely, wry humour which is rooted deep in working-class experience. It is a phrase used by people who realize that they are seen by 'the bosses' as very small cogs in the industrial machine, and to that extent the phrase is defensively ironic. At the same time there stands behind it some muted consciousness that, quite literally, it is such people who are 'keeping the railway going'.

These phrases, though, pick up only one tone within the article. There is another more formal tone:

We are told
makes her presence known
who were very anxious to stay
Needless to say

Such phrases belong to a more literary, middle class idiom, of a kind that does, however, occur awkwardly in letters to and from 'respectable' working-class people. The use of a phrase like 'we are told', which occurs in the same sentence as 'Nellie and Edie are keeping the railway going', indicates an important tonal divergence. Contrasting with the earlier phrase it immediately distances the experience described so that, with some sense of shock, we remember that we are reading the report of the visit in a semi-public printed medium. The position of the reporter seems to have shifted from inside the family experience he is describing to a position outside,

from which he comments, asserting his identity and establishing his credentials.

The use of working-class idioms, a use which we have not seen made in the same way by any other *Mirror* writing, may be an example of the *Mirror* staff skilfully employing a style which it feels to be suitable to this particular audience of this semi-public medium. It may be that the *Mirror* writers caught in the course of the interviews, unconsciously or semi-consciously, the colloquial idioms of those people with whom they were speaking; or that they had heard the idioms in letters from readers; or that they summoned them up from their own background, as Cudlipp says they could. Whichever explanation is correct, ears sensitive enough to catch this kind of speech would surely hear also these people's ideas and sense their attitudes, ideas and attitudes which could be played back to the *Mirror* for use in the shaping of its election campaign in 1945. If one looks for evidence of the *Mirror* having a special relationship to the Forces, of the *Mirror* having learned how to speak to people in the Forces and to their relatives at home, the language of Garry Allighan's column and of the *Good Morning* interviews provides some of it.

A characteristic of the *Good Morning* interviews is an effort to evoke a generalized response, available to a wide range of readers, by focusing on particulars:

There's another addition to your home, Ordinary Seaman Alan Cliffe, of 4 Hollyhey-drive, Wythenshaw, Manchester, in the form of 'Sacha', a brown, sleek-haired pup. He is full of life and gradually making friends with 'Simon' and 'Peter'.

Everybody was in the best of spirits when 'Good Morning' called, and this is what they all had to say to you:—

Your mother is now back to her old self once more and waiting for the time when you will be strolling along the Parkway with her. The Parkway is looking really grand, these days, Alan, and, in fact, your road looked a picture of green with the sun shining brilliantly when we called the other day.

Dad—as busy as ever at the Post Office—is tickled to death about the expressions in your letters. Keep them up; the family loves them . . .

The dogs, the Parkway, the mother's recuperation, and the father's amusement at his son's letters, these details, while particular to Alan Cliffe's own home environment, are likely to have sounded undertones of immediacy in many of *Good Morning*'s readers. Not everyone lives near Alan Cliffe's Parkway, but a great many of us could readily substitute another name for it, especially if we had been in a

submarine for weeks. Such selection reinforces the similar use of a generalized working-class tone. The whole endeavour seems to be to write a letter to everyone at once.

Working-class idioms appear and disappear in the *Good Morning* interviews with no discernible pattern. Sometimes the reporter's 'letter' is condescending to its subjects. Quite the opposite attitude is at work in this example:

I got off the train at Liphook, Hampshire, and walked slightly uphill through the station yard. I was the only moving thing in sight—the sun was warm and the two porters sitting with brown cigarettes in their mouths, were relaxed and didn't move a muscle—it must have been siesta hour . . .

The road was a long, winding lane—when I had walked a mile I went into the butchery—the straw-hatted shopkeeper told me that 'Farthings' was five hundred yards further on, on the other side of the road.

The gate was open and I was met by a brother and sister—the girl was three and a half, but her brother hadn't yet celebrated his second birthday.

They were happy kiddies in their place in the sun—they had toys and books and a nanny, who humoured them when they fell off or got scratched by Sherry, the cat. Richard wore a Panama but Cecily had a mass of golden curls that protected her head from the sun . . .

When I went into the gate the kiddies ran into the house for their mother. Mrs. Wingfield thought I was a Hoover salesman, but she was kind. I told her the Editor had recently had a letter from her husband, Lt.-Cdr. M. J. R. Wingfield, D.S.O., D.S.C., and that he would like to photograph the kiddies and publish the family picture in the paper.

'Certainly', Mrs. Wingfield said, and she produced a tin of toffees and some kiddies' books to put the children in the mood for photoplay . . .

Everything is ship shape at your home, Sir—the lawn needs your attention and the borders are just a trifle ragged, but the family is happy and well. The garage, of course, needs a little tidying—Cecily's tricycle and Richard's toys are draped round the walls, and the pram just inside the door is hard against your bicycle, which, by the way, has two soft tyres.

But apart from that, and your absence, everything at 'Farthings' is as it was—and everyone is happy as ever at the Hampshire retreat.

That one is quoted almost entire since it points up so sharply the tone of other *Good Morning* interviews. Of course it is not meant to be typical. It is distanced in many ways: in the heading the interviewer is named as Ron Richards, one of the prominent members of the *Good Morning* staff, whereas the other interviewers remain anonymous—it is a sort of courtesy to the Wingfield family to select a man specially for them. It is also distanced by the long walk necessary to reach the house from the station; by the presentation of credentials from the Editor; and by the absence of references to friendships outside the family which serve to place the other interviews socially. Yet it is placed in the interview series and maintains the normal format.

After the first two slow, descriptive paragraphs, the tone moves interestingly in 'but her brother hadn't yet celebrated his second birthday'. A long-winded way of saying 'he wasn't yet two', it would be more at home in an official announcement.

The fourth paragraph is amazing. Is it possible that this writing is being held straight? Could a *Mirror* writer say 'their place in the sun', or 'a nanny, who humoured them when they fell off' without being aware of the *Mirror* tradition which was to make 'hours in the sunshine at home and abroad' the salt stoked into a sensitive wound? (See later, page 97). Could the interviewer describe the Panama hat and golden curls, with Sherry in the background, without calling to mind the *Good Morning* photographs where a child clutches its mother's skirt on the gravel path in front of a red brick council house?

'Mrs. Wingfield thought I was a Hoover salesman, but she was kind.' Kind. But. Why, one wonders, are the other families who anxiously peer into the camera, posed before oval photographs of their parents over a wooden clock, not usually described as kind? The other *Good Morning* families are seldom heard to say 'Certainly'. Nor, for that matter, are their borders often 'just a trifle ragged' in their Lancashire 'retreats'. This world of discourse is far removed from that of 'Nellie and Edie are helping to keep the railway going'. It is not simply that the Wingfields' social milieu is in a different class, and so different particular details are chosen to evoke the generalized picture, but that, unless the interview is thought to be ironic, the interviewer adopts a quite different attitude towards his material on behalf of his assumed audience. Wingfield is addressed as 'Sir', and credited with all his decorations; the homely news about the garden has about it an air of nervous banter, a wariness of going beyond the bounds of respectfulness. By no means all this deference could be attributed to the respect towards their officers

enjoined upon men in submarines, or the respect owed to a man with the D.S.O. and D.S.C. There remains a surplus of instinctive forelock-touching not found anywhere in the war-time *Mirror*.

The possibility remains that the tone of the interview is ironic, and viciously so, the writer speaking to a known, sceptical audience over the heads of the people interviewed. But more probably the paper wanted to include an officer's family in the series, for democratic diversity, but felt it had to suppress any note of class hostility because it was read by men of all ranks living close confined together in submarines.

* * *

Within the limits mentioned, the *Mirror's* own Forces column always took the soldier's side against the 'old men' in authority who were allegedly hampering the war effort. The criticism of authority ranged from naming the units in which blanco and 'bull' were more rigorous to such outspokenness as 'the accepted tip for Army leadership would, in plain truth, be this: All who aspire to mislead others in war should be brass-buttoned bone-heads, socially prejudiced, arrogant and fussy.' Hugh Cudlipp calls the column a 'safety valve', but there was a time early in the war when it was accused of being something much graver. In 1941 Winston Churchill pointedly told Cecil King how a Fifth Column would work: 'a perfervid zeal for intensification of the war effort would be used as a cloak behind which to insult and discredit one Minister after another. Every grievance would be exploited to the full, especially those grievances which lead to class dissension . . . The Army system and discipline would be attacked.' The Government continued to be disturbed by the *Mirror's* criticism of the direction of the war, and after private recriminations it culminated in a debate in the House of Commons. The Government's case was led by Herbert Morrison, then Home Secretary, and Aneurin Bevan was the *Mirror's* principal defender. He asked the House why men in the Army weren't treated as adults, and argued that the *Mirror's* criticism of the Army would have effect only if it was confirmed by the soldiers' own experience. Comment in other national newspapers generally supported the *Mirror* against the Government. It is worth noting that several MPs, including Churchill, made enquiries at that time into who owned the *Mirror*.

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The *Mirror* had been born in 1903 as a paper for gentlewomen, written by gentlewomen. Although that proved a false start, women predominated in the paper's readership for many years. The 1938

PEP Press Report stated: 'The *Daily Mirror* in 1935 was a paper with a definitely upper and middle class appeal, though again, nearly half its sales were in the fourth income group, and only thirty per cent of its readers were men.' In the years 1935-39, during Bartholomew's revolution, that confusing mixture of 'upper and middle class appeal' aimed at a lower income group, especially women, produced an odd bran-tub of items. It was a fat tabloid, often 32 pages, bent on amusing and provoking its readers, but it seems to have had no clear impression of who those readers were, of how they located themselves socially or politically.

Cudlipp reveals that the paper had at least one kind of audience in its sights: '... a section of citizens much neglected by newspapers of the time. Girls—working girls; hundreds of thousands of them, toiling over typewriters and ledgers and reading in many cases nothing more enlightening than *Peg's Paper*.' The working girls were accordingly fed with dream interpretations, tennis tips, 'Lover's Log' by Clarissa Lynn, 'the famous numerologist', gossip about 'Paris, the fairy book city of gaiety and romance', 'The Secret Diary of a Doctor', serials, features about film idols; but also advice, about dealing with problem parents, bosses, boy friends, cooking, complexions and fashions.

Several women columnists addressed themselves to women's interests, and a few men implicitly aimed at the same audience. Some of the women were well known writers. Emily Post, for instance, gave advice on etiquette: 'Emily Post tells you . . . How to light a cigarette . . . How to Answer a Wedding Invitation . . . How to talk to a Golfer . . . How to Greet People'; 'Lord Baldwin's son insults Emily Post!' Elinor Glyn wrote on such matters as *The Meaning Of The Marriage Service* ('If he is utterly despicable you cannot honour him.') Dorothy Dix, 'the woman who knows everything about love', wrote a homely agony column: 'If you want your husband to chum with you, you have to be interested in the things that interest him.' Others were *Mirror* specialist writers. Eileen Ascroft's Sanctuary column, subtitled 'A message of peace and comfort', and later her 'League of Loneliness', a weekly letter, asking 'Are you the sort of woman who makes for herself a private hell?'—such features, and many others like them, supplied what Cecil King has described as 'buckets of sentiment'; 'Eileen Ascroft sat on the grass by a baby's side. And in that baby's eyes she saw all the mystery of Love fulfilled.'

Prominent among the men who wrote for *Mirror* women was Godfrey Winn: 'I have to be honest with you always, for otherwise this page can have no reality for any of us.' It was called his

Personality Page, and certainly Winn's own personality bulked large. 'Dashing up the Kingston by-pass on my way to keep a date for lunch at the Ivy', and on the same day 'having to dash to Grosvenor House for a dip in the pool, where I find Osbert Sitwell', and later having to 'Dash back to town again to have a cocktail with Noel Coward in his studio', Winn was always well connected, and he sought to connect his readers too:

It was Wordsworth who said . . . Such a moment of revelation came to me on Friday evening as we drove over to Eton to see the fireworks. The light was fading rapidly along the banks of Runnymede.

In the car the wireless was turned on, and under the wand of Toscanini the Adagio of the Eroica took on a new significance.

Perhaps you were listening in, too, that night, and the same burst of immortal exultation filled your hearts.

I only wish you could have been with me.

There was another regular column in the paper, Cassandra's, in which Wordsworth, Eton, and the Adagio of the Eroica could have appeared only in a very different social light. Winn exulted: 'how damn lucky we are to be members of a democracy like our own . . . where the poorest subject has equal political and legal rights with the richest men and women in the land, where so far the stench of corruption does not permeate the atmosphere of high places.' Cassandra was later, after Winn left the *Mirror* in 1938, to make hay of 'my favourite tennis player, Mr. Winn' precisely for his generous sympathy for those in 'high places'.

Two other columnists should be mentioned briefly. There was the author of *Ivor Lambe's Tales*, a gossip column inhabiting almost exclusively the drawing-rooms and coming-out parties of the fashionable. 'Miss Symons-Jeune will be among the loveliest brides this season.' And there was Dr. Ivor Beaumont who, dealing with infected gums and impetigo, could start a column with:

This isn't a pleasant article. Don't read it at all if you can't face facts.

What's a kiss?

A bit of heaven snatched from a sordid world under an understanding moon, a gay bit of fun, meaning nothing and earning, perhaps, a laughing cuff on the ear.

Yes, it's all that, BUT—

It's rather horrid sometimes being a doctor . . .

Women were constantly regarded only in their traditional roles of wife, mother or sweetheart; their interests were private, domestic ones. As late as June 1939 the women's page chirped:

Readers eager for the latest news from the Polish corridor or the Suez canal had better turn to other pages. I have to deal with a sterner, starker social problem. STOCKINGS.

The women's pages often stressed value for money, estimating that many readers didn't have much to spend, and continually helped them with economical ways of keeping up with fashion, in a non-sense, girl-to-girl tone: 'One snappy suit . . . hot from Paris. Make it from an old frock—like this. Unpick the waist. Cut the top up the middle . . .' and so on, ending with 'It's effective. We know—we've done it ourselves'.

Almost every feature page of the time exhorted its readers to write in with their views, or ask for help, or for various offers. 'We are calling this page YOU', women were told. And as war approached, housewives were advised to stock up their cupboards and plant vegetables. It was these two functions, participation and advice, that were, in the long run, to prove most enduring and influential in all the *Mirror's* address to women.

The pre-war address varied widely. It was not a simple question of modifying the tone according to the subject: fashion advice or high society gossip was sometimes delivered with gushy delight and at other times with the brisk, downright edge of Cassandra. The paper's readers, that is to say, were offered no consistent attitudes: fashion, or 'society', or politics could be matters of common sense, or of frivolous indulgence. It is hard to imagine any one sort of woman who could feel every day that the paper was talking to her, for her. But the *Mirror* was learning, perhaps by its mistakes: and the communal stresses of wartime were to produce a far more homogeneous view in the paper.

From the confused molecules of the pre-war period, two elements survived and became dominant in the *Mirror's* wartime address to women readers: its encouragement to them to participate in the paper, even if only by writing for a free offer of powder, and its direct, brisk advisory function. What had before the war been principally devices, among several others, to boost circulation turned into an instrument for sensing social change; articulating it and seeking to direct it. The seeds of 1945's *Mirror* were in these two pre-war tones. It is hardly too much to say that the later content was a consequence of the tones: it was by learning how to talk to its readers that the paper learned what to talk to them about.